

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 16760

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM
SUBJECT: ALTERNATE PLAN FOR SOME OF MRS. CARTER'S
TIME IN INDIA

1. IN CONNECTION WITH PLANS FOR PRESIDENT AND MRS. CARTER'S VISIT TO INDIA, I HOPE THAT AN IDEA CAN BE PURSUED WHICH WAS RECENTLY FLOATED WITH DR. PETER BOURNE IN THE WHITE HOUSE BY DR. CARL TAYLOR, DEAN OF JOHN HOPKINS'S SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

2. THE PROPOSAL IS THAT MRS. ROSALYN CARTER VISIT SEVAGRAM, THE SITE OF GANDHI'S ASHRAM, AND DEDICATE FORMALLY THE THREE BUILDINGS OF THE GANDHI MEMORIAL MEDICAL COLLEGE THERE THAT HAVE BEEN CONSTRUCTED WITH HELP FROM USAID. SEVAGRAM IS LOCATED IN CENTRAL INDIA, SOMEWHAT NORTH OF NAGPUR. DR. SHUSHILA NAYER, FOUNDER OF THE MEDICAL COLLEGE, WAS GANDHI'S PERSONAL PHYSICIAN AND SERVED AS UNION MINISTER OF HEALTH IN THE PRE-INDIRA DAYS. SHE IS CURRENTLY A MEMBER OF THE LOK SABHA AND IS MOST EAGER TO HAVE MRS. CARTER MAKE THIS VISIT AND DO THESE HONORS. HER INSTITUTION IN SEVAGRAM HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS "INDIA'S ONLY TRULY RURAL MEDICAL COLLEGE."

3. A VISIT TO SEVAGRAM WOULD TAKE THE BETTER PART OF A DAY. FLYING TIME FROM DELHI TO NAGPUR IS ABOUT ONE HOUR.
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THE DRIPY FROM NAGPUR TO SEVAGRAM, PASSING THROUGH SOME OF INDIA'S POOREST VILLAGES, TAKES ROUGHLY ANOTHER HOUR. AT LEAST TWO HOURS WOULD NEED TO BE ALOTTED FOR SEVAGRAM ITSELF TO VISIT GANDHI'S ASHRAM, TOUR AND DO THE HONORS AT THE MEDICAL COLLEGE AND HOSPITAL, AND POSSIBLY ALSO LOOK IN VINOBHA BHAVE AT HIS ASHRAM NEARBY.

4. IF MRS. CARTER SHOULD DECIDE TO ACCEPT THIS PROPOSAL, WE ARE SURE THAT SHE WOULD FIND THE EXPERIENCE REWARDING. AND SUCH AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN RURAL INDIA AND ITS HEALTH NEEDS WOULD UNQUESTIONABLY DRAW GREAT PUBLIC ACCLAIM THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN OUR VIEW IT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY WIDEN THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE LIMITED TIME PRESIDENT AND MRS. CARTER CAN DEVOTE TO INDIA ON THIS VISIT.

5. THERE ARE LOGISTICAL QUESTIONS WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPLORED ADEQUATELY IF WE GET A GREEN LIGHT FROM WASHINGTON. AS THINGS STAND, WE ARE NOT EVEN HINTING OF THIS POSSIBILITY TO THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT, NOR HAVE WE OFFERED ANY ENCOURAGEMENT TO SHUSHILA NAYAR'S HOPES.
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